

RESPONDING TO BIAS IN THE CLASSROOM

Some tips compiled by the Diversity and Equity Advisory Committee:

If you'd like to add to our tip list email: eyoshina@spscc.ctc.edu

1. Ground rules and norms make responding to bias easier. You can always go back and say, "That violated one of our classroom norms." One example list is available here: <http://www.mssdc.com/pdf/SoCC-program1Color.indd.pdf>
2. You must speak up. As the teacher, you are the leadership in the classroom and the students look to you for direction. Silence will be read as consent by the targeted students.
3. You can tell the class early that you know you may not hear or be aware of every incident, or realize that certain things feel like bias, but you can be contacted for support (email, note, speaking after class, office hours) and that you will respond.
4. Teach students how to respond with "I" statements (I felt _____ when you said _____)
5. Teach students to respond for themselves (Creative resistance technique, from the New Wilderness Project! 1. Ask a question. 2. Listen, 3. Speak your truth) The students' goal is to *liberate themselves*, not to educate others...unless they want to.
6. How you can respond to bias:
 - a. Repeat back what was just said, "So you're saying that because you know a Native American person with an alcohol problem that all Native people must be alcoholics." Often the student will hear what they sound like and self-correct.
 - b. Ask a question: "So do you believe that we can judge all Native people based on your experience with your neighbor? Does that feel fair?"
 - c. Ask for other students' input: "Does anyone else have a different opinion/experience?" Be careful, though—maybe no one does have a different opinion, or maybe they'll repeat the bias with their story. Be ready to reframe the comment yourself.
 - d. Make an observation of behavior, not a judgment: "Did you realize that what you just said caused a reaction? Would you like to know how it impacted other students?"
 - e. —or if you don't want to put other students on the spot, say, "How it impacted me?"
 - f. Validate the part of the story you can and rephrase: "It sounds like you've experienced some discrimination yourself, and that's what you're really trying to say. I don't really think the fact that the other man in the story was black is relevant." Or, "I know many people feel the same way, but is there a different way to look at it? Can you find a way to state that sympathetically?"

- g. Acknowledge intent and impact: “I know you and that you’re a great person, so I know you didn’t mean to hurt anyone’s feelings, however, I have to point out that what you just said was a stereotype.”
- h. Put a stop to the comment: “I just have to stop for a moment. I’m not comfortable with the use of the word ‘retard’ and I’m going to ask you not to use it.”
- i. Give more information: “Did you know that Maya was born in America and doesn’t know any Spanish?”
- j. Use appropriate humor—not shaming, but conveying the message that what just happened is not acceptable. Sometimes just saying, “Wow,” sends a message.
- k. If it is practical to educate or use the incident as a teachable moment, do it!
- l. If you need to, talk to the offender outside of class: “I know this may be uncomfortable, but I need to check in with you about.....Some of the other students let me know that they’re uncomfortable with what you said today, and I need to debrief it with you.”
- m. Acknowledge your own mistakes, “I’m sorry I didn’t address this yesterday. I just honestly didn’t know what to say. However, I’ve thought about it, and I do feel like we need to spend some time talking about this today.”

OTHERS....try to find as many tools for your toolkit as possible!

TEACHING RESOURCES:

Teaching Diverse Students Initiative <http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/>: The most effective teaching/retention strategies can be borrowed and adapted by our colleagues in the K-12 system.

EdChange: Paul Gorski’s 10 Commitments of a Multicultural Educator:

<http://blog.fedcan.ca/2011/05/20/equity-and-social-justice-from-the-inside-out-ten-commitments-of-a-multicultural-educator/#more-1531>

and the EdChange website: <http://www.edchange.org/>

Campus Pride: Ask a question from LGBTQ! Student leaders on the blog, or check out other resources: <http://www.campuspride.org/issues.asp>